

**AMENDMENT TO THE SPECIFICATION**

*Page 8--amend the seventh paragraph (beginning at line 20).*

Figure 4 is a diagrammatic view of a hook connection portion of a retaining profile with a leg at the underside as shown in Figure 3 and showing the machining tools for producing the undercut configuration,

*Page 9--amend the fifth paragraph (beginning at line 13).*

Figure 13 shows a perspective view of a panel, partially cut away, having the ~~fastening system~~ retaining profiles shown in Figure ~~[[1]]~~ 2 and Figure 6.

*Page 9--amend the seventh paragraph (beginning at line 16).*

Referring to Figure 1 of the drawing a floor covering 1 with the proposed fastening system 2 is composed of a plurality of similar panels 3, 4, 5 and 6. Each panel has a top surface and bottom surface and four narrow sides around the edges of the panel. The first panel 4 has at mutually opposite narrow sides mutually matching retaining profiles 4a and 4b with complementary hook elements 4c and 4d. In that way, it is always possible for a first retaining profile 4a to be joined to a second retaining profile 5b of a second panel 5.

*Page 11--amend the second and third full paragraphs (beginning at line 8 and 19, respectively) and the paragraph that carries over to page 12 (beginning at line 24).*

Figure 3 shows a side view on an enlarged scale of a portion of a second embodiment of the fastening system 2. Figure 3 shows a first retaining profile ~~[[4a]]~~ 4a' of a panel 4' with a hook element ~~[[4c]]~~ 4c' that is formed from a leg ~~[[4e]]~~ 4e' that projects substantially perpendicularly from the edge and is arranged at the top side ~~[[16]]~~ 16' of the panel 4'. In this case, a hook projection 4f' that faces towards the underside ~~[[7]]~~ 7' of the panel 4' is arranged at the free end of the leg ~~[[4e]]~~ 4e'. The hook projection 4f' is in engagement with a hook projection 5f' of a second panel 5'. The hook projection 5f' of the second panel 5' forms the retaining profile of the rear narrow side. It is also formed from a leg ~~[[5e]]~~ 5e' that projects from the edge of the second panel 5' and is arranged at the underside ~~[[8]]~~ 8' of the second panel 5'.

The hook projection 5f' is also arranged at the free end of the leg [[5e]] 5e' and faces towards the top side [[9]] 9' of the panel 5'. The hook projections 4f' and 5f' of the two panels 4' and 5' are hooked one into the other.

The hook projection 4f' of the first panel 4' with the leg [[4e]] 4e' at the top side bears, in the assembled condition of the second panel 5', against the leg [[5e]] 5e' at the underside of the second panel 5'. For the purposes of affording well-defined contact, clearance L1' is provided between the hook projection 5f' of the leg [[5e]] 5e' at the underside of the second panel 5' and the leg [[4e]] 4e' at the top side of the first panel 4'.

As shown in Figure 3, retaining surfaces [[4g]] 4g' and [[5g]] 5g' of the hook projections 4f' and 5f' engage one behind the other in such a way that the hook projections 4f' and 5f' can be hooked one into the other only by elastic deformation. By virtue of that configuration and due to elastic deformation when joining the hook projections 4f' and 5f', the complementary hook projections 4f' and 5f' involve a snapping engagement into a defined end position. In this embodiment, the retaining surfaces [[4g]] 4g' and [[5g]] 5g' of the hook projections 4f' and 5f' are kept simple and are in the form of inclinedly disposed flat surfaces. They decrease from the free ends of the hook projections 4f' and 5f' towards the legs [[4e]] 4e' and [[5e]] 5e'. In this embodiment, as can be seen in Figure 3, the retaining surface [[4g]] 4g' of the hook projection 4f' of the first panel 4' is rounded off at the upper and the lower ends. The same applies for the retaining surface [[5g]] 5g' of the hook projection 5f' of the second panel [[5]] 5'. That promotes interengagement of the hook projections 4f' and 5f' insofar as, during a joining movement that is perpendicular to the plane in which the panels are laid, the retaining profiles [[4a]] 4a' and [[5b]] 5b' are slowly elastically spread open. That facilitates the laying procedure and protects the retaining profiles [[4a]] 4a' and [[5b]] 5b'.

*Page 12--amend the first three full paragraphs (beginning at line 7, 10, and 19, respectively).*

The retaining surfaces [[4g]] 4g' and [[5g]] 5g', which bear against each other, of the co-operating panels 4' and 5', therefore bear snugly against each other in a region-wise manner. The resulting intermediate spaces can advantageously serve as adhesive pockets 12e and 12f.

Clearance L2 is provided between the end [[5h]] 5h' of the hook projection 5f' at the lower side of the second panel 5' and the inside surface [[13]] 13' of the first panel 4'. That

resulting intermediate space can also serve as an adhesive pocket 12g. The same applies in regard to the end [[14]] 14' of the hook projection 4f' at the top side of the first panel 4' that, in the assembled condition, bears against the second panel 5' at least in the region of the top sides [[16]] 16' and [[9]] 9' of the panels. In this embodiment, an intermediate space, which is also in the form of an adhesive pocket 12h, is enlarged beneath the top sides [[16]] 16' and [[9]] 9' of the panels towards the interior of the joint. The arrangement once again involves well-defined contact between the hook projections 4f' and 5f' and a gap-free surface for the floor covering 1.

Finally, Figure 4 shows a diagrammatic view of a panel [[5]] 5' with a retaining profile [[5b]] 5b' according to the invention. The Figure diagrammatically shows how the undercut contour of the retaining projection [[5f]] 5f' can be produced by means of two cutting tools W1 and W2, which rotate about the axes X1 and X2. The tools W1 and W2 produce an opening 15 in which a complementary hook projection of a further panel (not shown) can be hooked in detent relationship.

*Page 13--amend the one full paragraph (beginning at line 6).*

Figure 5.1 shows a further embodiment that is based on the embodiment of Figure 5. In this respect, ~~identical~~ similar features in those two Figures are denoted by ~~the same references a~~ prime symbol in Figure 5.1. In comparison with the embodiment of Figure 5 the embodiment of Figure 5.1 is designed in such a way that the end 35 of the hook element [[24]] 24' at the top side of the first panel [[22]] 22' has at its free end a projecting detent or latching element 36 which engages into a recess 37 of undercut configuration in the hook element [[25]] 25' at the underside of the second panel [[23]] 23'. In order to latch the hook elements [[24]] 24' and [[25]] 25' a somewhat greater pressure has to be applied than in the embodiment of Figure 5. The panels [[22]] 22' and [[23]] 23' are arrested more firmly than in the embodiment of Figure 5 by the detent element [[31]] 31' engaging into the recess [[32]] 32' and the additional detent element 36 engaging into the recess 37. The projecting detent elements [[31]] 31' and 36 respectively of the panels [[22]] 22' and [[23]] 23' are in the form of beads or ridges that extend over the entire length of a narrow side. It will be appreciated that, instead of a bead on a hook projection, it is also possible for example to provide a projecting nose having a bevel (not shown), with the bevel of the nose being so oriented that, with increasing progress in the joining

operation, the corresponding hook element is gently expanded. The recesses [[32]] 32' and 37 of undercut configuration in the panels [[22]] 22' and [[23]] 23' are in the form of elongate channels that receive the beads in the assembled condition. The bead and the channel can be milled by so-called formatting in a production pass. For the purposes of joining the panels [[22]] 22' and [[23]] 23', a bead and a channel have to be fitted one into the other with elastic deformation of the hook elements [[24]] 24' and [[25]] 25'. In addition, the embodiments of Figures 5 and 5.1 differ in terms of the co-operation of the legs 26, 27, 26', 27' and the hook projections 29, 28, 29', 28'. As shown in Figure 5, the leg 26 bears against the hook projection 29 and clearance is provided between the hook projection 28 and the leg 27. As shown in Figure 5.1 clearance is provided between the leg [[26]] 26' and the hook projection [[29]] 29' and the hook projection [[28]] 28' bears against the leg [[27]] 27'.

*Page 18--amend the paragraph that carries over to page 19 (beginning at line 26).*

Figure 13 shows a floor covering 1 incorporating the fastening system described herein. Panel 64 is a three-dimensional rectangular structure having a flat top surface, a flat bottom surface, and four narrow sides around the edges of the panel 64. Two of the narrow sides are oppositely disposed on the short sides 65, 66 of the panel and two of the narrow sides are oppositely disposed on the long sides 67, 68 of the panel. Mutually matching retaining profiles [[4a]] 64a and [[4b]] 64b are formed in the short sides 65, 66, respectively, of panel 64. Additionally, panel 64 has mutually opposite, positively engaging profiles 42 and 43 formed in the long sides 67, 68, respectively, of panel 64.